
1. Introduction

This guide is intended as a reference for analysts who need information about using the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). The main objective of SIPP is to provide accurate and comprehensive information about the income and program participation of individuals and households in the United States, and about the principal determinants of income and program participation. SIPP offers detailed information on cash and noncash income on a subannual basis. The survey also collects data on taxes, assets, liabilities, and participation in government transfer programs. SIPP data allow the government to evaluate the effectiveness of federal, state, and local programs.

This chapter and the ones that follow come under two main sections. Section I encompasses discussions of survey design and content, data editing and imputation procedures, sampling and nonsampling error, and weighting. Section II provides information about working with each of the three types of SIPP microdata files (the core wave files, topical module files, and full panel files), as well as instructions for linking SIPP files. This introduction offers a brief overview of each of those topics.

Evolution and History of SIPP

Until the advent of SIPP, the major source of data on income and program participation was the Current Population Survey (CPS) March Income Supplement. The CPS continues to be the source of all official income and poverty statistics published by the Census Bureau. The CPS, however, is designed primarily to obtain information on employment. Because income measurement was never the primary purpose of the CPS, it has certain gaps in this area. For example, CPS respondents are asked in March to recall their income during the preceding calendar year. Many respondents have difficulty in remembering sources such as property income or irregular income over the yearlong reference period. Also, the CPS does not capture the impact of changes in household composition during the year, nor does the survey explicitly measure periods of program participation. Further, the CPS does not collect data on assets and liabilities, which are needed to measure more completely a household's economic status and eligibility for program benefits. To add those items to the CPS questionnaire would dilute the main purpose of that survey and unduly increase respondent burden. Finally, the CPS is designed to be a cross-sectional survey. During the 1970s, the increasing size of government programs and their interactions with the labor market led to a need for longitudinal data.

To address those data issues, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) initiated the Income Survey Development Program (ISDP) in the late 1970s. In developing ISDP content and procedures, HEW focused on questionnaire length, length of reference period, and linkage of survey data to program records. The 1979 ISDP Panel was a longitudinal survey in which respondents were asked about their income, labor force participation, and other characteristics;

respondents were recontacted every 3 months to supply information on themselves and others with whom they resided; the 3-month span was the *reference period* for the interview.

The First SIPP Panels

The lessons learned from ISDP were incorporated into the initial design of SIPP, which was used for the first 10 years of the survey. The original design of SIPP called for a nationally representative sample of individuals 15 years of age and older to be selected in households in the civilian noninstitutionalized population. Those individuals, along with others who subsequently lived with them, were to be interviewed once every 4 months over a 32-month period. To ease field procedures and spread the work evenly over the 4-month reference period for the interviewers, the Census Bureau randomly divided each panel into four *rotation groups*. Each rotation group was interviewed in a separate month. Four rotation groups thus constituted one cycle, called a *wave*, of interviewing for the entire panel (Chapter 2). At each interview, respondents were asked to provide information covering the 4 months since the previous interview. The 4-month span was the reference period for the interview. The first sample, the 1984 Panel, began interviews in October 1983 with sample members in 19,878 households. The second sample, the 1985 Panel, began in February 1985. Subsequent panels began in February of each calendar year, resulting in concurrent administration of the survey in multiple panels.

The original goal was to have each panel cover eight waves. However, a number of panels were terminated early (Chapter 2) because of insufficient funding. For example, the 1988 Panel had six waves; the 1989 Panel, part of which was folded into the 1990 Panel, was halted after three waves. In addition, the intent was for each SIPP panel to have an initial sample size of 20,000 households. That target was rarely achieved; again, budget issues were usually the reason.

The 1996 redesign (discussed below) entailed a number of important changes. First, the 1996 Panel spans 4 years and encompasses 12 waves. The redesign has abandoned the overlapping panel structure of the earlier SIPP, but sample size has been substantially increased: the 1996 Panel had an initial sample size of 40,188 households (Chapter 2).

The 1996 Redesign

In 1990, the Census Bureau asked the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) at the National Research Council to undertake a comprehensive review of SIPP. The resulting report, *The Future of the Survey of Income and Program Participation* (Citro and Kalton, 1993), summarizes the first 9 years of SIPP and provides recommendations for the future of the survey. Some of those recommendations were implemented with the 1996 SIPP Panel in what is known as the *1996 redesign*.

One of the goals of the 1996 redesign was to improve the quality of longitudinal estimates in order to provide better information for policy makers. Specific changes include the following:

- A larger initial sample than in previous panels, with a target of 37,000 households;
- A single 4-year panel instead of overlapping 32-month panels;
- Twelve or 13 waves instead of 8;
- The introduction of computer-assisted interviewing (CAI), which, among other improvements, permits automatic consistency checks of reported data during the interview; those checks can reduce the level of postcollection edits and imputation and thus help to maintain longitudinal consistency; and
- Oversampling of households from areas with high poverty concentrations.

The first interviews of the redesigned SIPP began in April 1996 with the 1996 Panel. Later in 1996, Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). That law significantly altered the nature of public transfer programs, shifting more responsibility to state governments, establishing new eligibility rules for a number of programs, and setting limits on reciprocity. The existing welfare program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), was replaced with a new program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Those changes came after interviewing for the 1996 Panel had already begun with a questionnaire designed for the array of transfer programs that existed before PRWORA was enacted. To accommodate program changes brought about by PRWORA, the Census Bureau began adapting transfer-program questions to reflect the current situation.

Uses of SIPP

SIPP produces national-level estimates for the U.S. resident population and subgroups. Although the SIPP design allows for both longitudinal and cross-sectional data analysis, SIPP is meant primarily to support longitudinal studies. SIPP's longitudinal features allow the analysis of selected dynamic characteristics of the population, such as changes in income, eligibility for and participation in transfer programs, household and family composition, labor force behavior, and other associated events.

One of the most important reasons for conducting SIPP is to gather detailed information on participation in transfer programs. Data from SIPP allow analysts to examine concurrent participation in multiple programs. SIPP data can also be used to address the following types of questions:

- How have changes in eligibility rules or benefit levels affected recipients?
- How have changes in the eligibility rules affected the program target population, that is, those eligible to receive benefits?
- How does income from other household members affect labor force participation and reasons for not working?
- How do wealth and income patterns differ for various age, gender, and racial groups?

Because SIPP is a longitudinal survey, capturing changes in household and family composition over a multiyear period, it can also be used to address the following questions:

- What factors affect change in household and family structure and living arrangements?
- What are the interactions between changes in the structure of households and families and the distribution of income?
- What effects do changes in household composition have on economic status and program eligibility?
- What are the primary determinants of turnover in programs such as Food Stamps?

The Survey

SIPP data show sample members' lives at discrete points in time, as well as a history of changes in their economic circumstances and household relationships. Understanding survey design, content, and procedures is key for analysts wishing to use SIPP data.

Design of SIPP

The adults followed in each SIPP panel come from a nationally representative sample of households in the civilian noninstitutionalized U.S. population. People selected into the SIPP sample are interviewed once every 4 months over the life of the panel. If original sample members 15 years of age or older move from their original addresses to other addresses, they are interviewed at the new addresses. The survey sample includes children residing with original sample members. If, after the first interview, other people not previously in the survey become part of a respondent's household, the new people are interviewed as long as they continue living with respondents from the first interview (Chapter 2).

SIPP Contents

Information collected in SIPP falls into two categories: core and topical. The core content includes questions asked at every interview and covers demographic characteristics; labor force participation; program participation; amounts and types of earned and unearned income received, including transfer payments; noncash benefits from various programs; asset ownership; and private health insurance. Most core data are measured on a monthly basis, although a few core items are measured only as of the interview date, once every 4 months.

Other questions produce in-depth information on specific subjects and are asked less frequently. Those topical questions are often found in *topical modules* that usually follow the core content. Topical questions probe in greater detail about particular social and economic characteristics and

personal histories. Included are such topics as assets and liabilities, school enrollment, marital history, fertility, migration, disability, and work history. Topical module questions typically collect information on events in the past or characteristics that tend to change slowly, if at all.

Data Editing and Imputation

Computer-assisted interviewing (CAI) allows some data editing to occur while the interview is in progress because the system detects inconsistencies and prompts the interviewer to ask the respondent for additional information. CAI also allows use of prior wave data for editing missing data from later waves, thus lessening the need for subsequent longitudinal editing. However, editing and imputation still occur after SIPP interviews are completed (Chapter 4). The Census Bureau edits data for consistency, imputes missing data, and creates internal data files and public use files for each wave.

After each panel is concluded, the Census Bureau creates a full panel file by stripping all edited and imputed values from the core data, linking those data, and then applying a different set of longitudinally consistent edit and imputation procedures to the resulting file. As part of that process, some data are recoded to maintain respondent confidentiality.

The Census Bureau uses several imputation procedures. Most common is some version of a sequential hot deck, in which SIPP statisticians impute missing data by searching for a “donor” respondent who is similar to the respondent with the missing data. The donor’s answers are used in the assignment of missing data to the original respondent’s record. Specific imputation procedures are discussed in Chapter 4. Data editing is still preferable to imputation and is used whenever a missing item can be logically inferred from other information that has been provided.

Accessing SIPP Information

Most analysts will find the published estimates from SIPP data useful. Census Bureau publications may provide required estimates, saving users the need to generate those estimates themselves. Published estimates can also provide a crosscheck for estimates prepared by analysts from the microdata files.¹

The Census Bureau makes published estimates from SIPP data available from several sources (Chapter 5). All public use microdata files are available on magnetic media or CD-ROM, along with a full set of documentation, directly from the Census Bureau. The Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) also provides access to SIPP microdata

¹ Prior to the 1996 Panel, the Census Bureau estimates were usually impossible to replicate exactly because they were based on internal data files that had not yet been topcoded and otherwise edited to protect the confidentiality of respondents. Although new topcoding procedures are being implemented with the 1996 and subsequent panels, to facilitate the production of comparable estimates, exact replication of some Census Bureau estimates will still be impossible.

for member institutions. In addition, the SIPP data and documentation that the Census Bureau releases are not copyrighted and thus can be shared, although users are cautioned that this provision applies only to materials written and distributed directly by federal agencies. Finally, analysts conducting exploratory work might wish to investigate the Census Bureau's on-line resources. SIPP microdata are available through two access tools—Surveys-on-Call and FERRET (Chapter 5). The home sites of both online tools can be accessed at the SIPP Web site (<http://www.sipp.census.gov/sipp>).

Nonsampling Errors, Sampling Errors, and Weighting

The *SIPP Quality Profile*, 3rd Ed. (U.S. Census Bureau, 1998a), offers an in-depth discussion of the sources and magnitude of errors in SIPP-based estimates. Although it addresses both sampling and nonsampling errors, it emphasizes the latter. This *Users' Guide* provides a summary chapter addressing nonsampling errors (Chapter 6), a chapter on sampling errors (Chapter 7), and a chapter on the use of weights (Chapter 8). In addition, Appendix C addresses weighting in detail.

Nonsampling Errors

All surveys—including SIPP—are subject to nonsampling errors from various sources. SIPP contains nonsampling errors common to most surveys, as well as errors that stem from SIPP's longitudinal design. Undercoverage in household surveys is due primarily to within-household omissions; the omission of entire households is less frequent. SIPP experiences some differential undercoverage of demographic subgroups; for example, the coverage ratio of black males over 15 years of age is much lower than that for white males in the same age group. To compensate for this differential undercoverage, the Census Bureau adjusts SIPP sample weights to population control totals. Little is known, however, about how effective those adjustments are in reducing biases.

Sample attrition is another major concern in SIPP because of the need to follow the same people over time. Attrition reduces the available sample size. To the extent that those leaving the sample are systematically different from those who remain in the sample, survey estimates could be biased.

Response errors in SIPP take on a number of forms. Recall errors are thought to be the source of the “seam phenomenon.” This effect results from the respondent's tendency to project current circumstances back onto each of the 4 prior months that constitute the SIPP reference period. When that happens, any changes in respondent circumstances that occurred during that 4-month period appear to have happened in the first month of the reference period. A disproportionate

number of changes appear to occur between the fourth month of one wave and the first month of the following wave, which is the “seam” between the two waves—hence the name.

Another potential source of response error is the time-in-sample effect. This effect refers to the tendency of sample members to “learn the survey” over time. The more times a sample member is interviewed, the better he or she learns the questionnaire. The concern is that sample members will alter their responses to the survey questions in an effort to conceal sensitive information or to minimize the length of the interview.

Sampling Errors

A common mistake in the estimation of sampling errors for survey estimates is to ignore the complex survey design and treat the sample as a simple random sample (SRS) of the population. This mistake occurs because most standard software packages for data analyses assume simple random sampling for variance estimation. When applied to SIPP estimates, SRS formulas for variances typically underestimate the true variances. Chapter 7 describes how to obtain appropriate variance estimates that take into account SIPP’s complex sample design.

Weighting

SIPP data analysts should understand the importance of using weights. The weight for a responding unit in a survey data set is an estimate of the number of units in the target population that the responding unit represents. In general, because population units may be sampled with different selection probabilities, and because response and coverage rates may vary across subpopulations, different responding units represent different numbers of units in the population.²

The combined effects of differential response, differential coverage, and differential attrition mean that unweighted analyses can produce biased results. Each SIPP file contains several alternative sets of weights that address the variety of units of analysis (such as persons, households, families, and subfamilies) and time periods for which survey estimates may be needed. It is important to understand the different weights on the files and to use those that are appropriate for a particular analysis.

The selection and use of weights in SIPP analyses are discussed in Chapter 8 and Appendix C.

² Most SIPP panels have not sampled different subpopulations at different rates. There are two exceptions: the 1990 and 1996 Panels. Chapter 2 discusses the oversamples included in each of those panels.

SIPP Public Use Files

There are three types of SIPP microdata files available for public use: core wave files, topical module files, and full panel files. Although content overlaps among these files, each is designed to facilitate a different kind of analysis.

Core Wave Files

SIPP core wave files contain the core labor force, income, household and family composition, and program participation data from one wave of interviews. Since the 1990 Panel, these files have been issued in a person-month format, with up to four records for each sample member. Each record contains data from one of the four reference months covered by the wave.³

Topical Module Files

Each topical module file contains all of the topical module subject areas that were administered during the wave in question. The files contain one record for each person who was a sample member at the time of the interview. When critical demographic and weight variables are included, the topical module files can be used independently from the core wave and full panel files. However, because topical module files contain only a small subset of the core items, users often need to merge data from either the core wave or the full panel files.

Full Panel Files

Full panel files are released after interviewing for a panel is completed. They contain one record for each original sample member, all children, and all adults who entered the sample after Wave 1. People who were not interviewed for 1 or more months over the course of the panel either have their data imputed or are identified as not in the sample, although their records remain in the file. Variables within each record correspond to the information that was collected in the core content sections of the interviews. Different variables occur with different frequency, depending upon how often certain questions were asked. For example, because a sample member's sex, date of birth, and race are unlikely to change, the variables corresponding to those attributes occur only once in each record. On the other hand, some questions from the core content, such as those about income and program participation, are asked for each month of the panel; the number of corresponding variables will reflect that fact. Similarly, SIPP-generated information can occur once (e.g., person number) or many times (e.g., monthly interview status) on each record.

³ Prior to the 1990 Panel, core wave files were issued with a single record for each person. Each record contained data for all 4 reference months covered by the wave.

Linking Files

Before linking files, users must understand several conceptual issues: reasons for nonmatches; handling of nonmatches; data quality of matched records containing imputed data; and design of the linked file. There are five ways of linking SIPP data files: within a core wave file; core wave file to core wave file; topical module file to core wave file; topical module file to full panel file; and core wave file to full panel file. The linking process is generally the same for each type of link. However, because variable names and file structures are different, the process for each type of linkage is described in Chapter 13.

Comparison of SIPP with Other Surveys

Because there is some overlap in the content of SIPP and certain other surveys, the question arises: When should an analyst use SIPP instead of the other surveys? A brief look at selected surveys might provide some guidance (Table 1-1 compares some key points as well).

Current Population Survey

The CPS, sponsored jointly by the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), is primarily a labor force survey. It is used to compute the federal government's official monthly unemployment statistics, along with other estimates of labor force characteristics. In addition to its core content, a different supplement is fielded each month. One of these, the March Annual Demographic Supplement, is currently the official source of estimates of income and poverty in the United States. Compared with SIPP, however, the CPS has gaps in the area of income measurement. A yearlong reference period means that CPS respondents are more likely than SIPP respondents to forget or misreport certain asset income or irregular income sources. The CPS does not collect data on assets and liabilities to the same extent as SIPP. The CPS is also less comprehensive in the area of program participation, sometimes missing partial-year data.

The CPS reporting unit is the person, but the sample covers housing units; whoever happens to be living at the address at the time of the interview is in the sample. When residents of a CPS housing unit move, they are not followed; instead, the new residents become sample members. Housing units spend 4 months in the sample, 8 months out, and 4 months in again. The target sample size for the CPS is 50,000 housing units each month. Like SIPP, the CPS sample covers the U.S.-resident noninstitutionalized population, although, unlike SIPP, the CPS includes people living in military barracks.

Table 1-1. Comparison of SIPP, CPS, and PSID

Feature	Survey of Income and Program Participation	CPS (March Income Supplement)	Panel Study of Income Dynamics
Sample size and design	1996 Panel: 40,188 households; new panel periodically; each original-sample adult in panel for no. of months in survey; interviews every 4 months	50,000 households; each household in sample for 8 months over 2-year period; rotation group design; monthly interviews (income supplement once per year)	9,000 families; over-represents low-income families; continuing panel with annual interviews
Sample designed to be representative within states?	No	Yes	No
Income data	Data for about 70 cash and in-kind <i>Sources</i> at each 4-month wave, with monthly reporting for most <i>Sources</i>	Data for prior calendar year for about 35 cash and in-kind <i>Sources</i>	Data for prior calendar year for about 25 cash and in-kind <i>Sources</i> with specific months received
Tax data	Information to determine federal, state, and local income taxes; payroll taxes; property taxes	None	Information to determine federal, state, and local income taxes; payroll taxes; property taxes
Asset-holdings data	Detailed inventory of real and financial assets and liabilities once each year for panels from 1996 forward and at least once per panel in prior years; more frequent measures for assets relevant for assistance programs	None, except home ownership	Regularly, information about home value and mortgage debt; occasionally, information about saving behavior and wealth
Expenditure data	Information at least once each panel before 1996 and once a year 1996 and beyond on previous month's out-of-pocket medical care costs, shelter costs (mortgage or rent and utilities), dependent care costs, and child support payments	None	Monthly rent or mortgage costs; annual utility costs; average weekly food costs; child support payments

Note: SIPP sample size and design information valid for the 1996 Panel. For information about pre-1996 SIPP panels, see Chapter 2.

Source: Citro, C.F., Michael, R.T., and Maritano, N. (eds.) (1995). *Measuring Poverty: A New Approach*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, Appendix B.

The Panel Study of Income Dynamics

The Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) was begun in 1968 as a nationally representative, longitudinal survey of the U.S. population. It initially included about 5,000 households and now has about 8,700. The University of Michigan conducts PSID on an annual basis; the focus of the

survey is economics and demographics, especially income sources and amounts, employment family composition changes, and residential location. The content is broad, however, and includes sociological and psychological measures. As of 1995, PSID had collected information from more than 50,000 individuals, spanning as much as 28 years of their lives. The sample includes individuals interviewed every year since 1968, a representative national sample of 2,000 Hispanic households added in 1990, and families formed by members of the original sample families.

Survey of Program Dynamics

The Survey of Program Dynamics (SPD) is a new longitudinal survey designed to be an annual follow-up to the 1992 and 1993 SIPP Panels. Approximately 38,000 households were in the initial sample; a second phase, initiated with the implementation of the core SPD questionnaire in 1998, was projected to include approximately 18,500 households, including all sample households with children and an overrepresentation of households in and near the poverty threshold. SPD data for 1996–2002, along with information collected from 1992 through 1995 for SIPP, will provide a combined 10 years of data measuring program eligibility, access, and participation. Analysts will be able to track welfare dependency, the beginning and end of periods of welfare, factors that may be causes of such periods, and the impacts that the changes will have on families, adults, and children over time.

Guide to This Document

The balance of this *Users' Guide* is organized as follows. Chapters 1 through 5 are introductory chapters, designed mainly for beginning SIPP users.

- Chapter 2 discusses how the SIPP survey is designed and implemented. The chapter describes the structure of the survey, sample selection, and field procedures.
- Chapter 3 examines the general nature of questions in SIPP. Discussion focuses on core and topical content, including brief descriptions of individual topical modules.
- Chapter 4 describes what happens after data collection. This chapter covers all aspects of post-data-collection processing, including consistency checks, data editing, and procedures for imputing missing data.
- Chapter 5 describes SIPP data files and supporting documentation and tells analysts where to find that information.

Chapters 6 through 8 provide more technical information on how to properly use the data and interpret the results.

- Chapter 6 discusses the types and sources of nonsampling error in SIPP, including recall error, the seam effect, time-in-sample effects, attrition bias, and sources of additional information about these topics.
- Chapter 7 defines sampling error and discusses how to calculate sampling errors for SIPP estimates.
- Chapter 8 discusses the topic of weights in SIPP, with a focus on how to choose weights.

Chapters 9 through 13 provide specific instructions for the use of the SIPP public use microdata files.

- Chapter 9 introduces this section by giving an overview of issues common to all of the SIPP data files.
- Chapter 10 describes how to use the core wave files. The chapter describes the structure of the files and how to use the accompanying technical documentation. It also discusses how the core wave files relate to the core survey instrument. Finally, the chapter provides detailed descriptions of how to use the core wave files when performing common tasks.
- Chapter 11 describes how to use the topical module files, the structure of the files, and use of the accompanying technical documentation. It also discusses how the topical module files relate to the corresponding topical module survey instruments. Finally, the chapter provides detailed descriptions of how to use the topical module files when performing common tasks.
- Chapter 12 describes how to use the full panel files, the structure of the files, and use of the accompanying technical documentation. It also discusses how the full panel files relate to the core survey instruments. Finally, the chapter provides detailed descriptions of how to use the full panel files when performing common tasks.
- Chapter 13 describes how to link core wave, topical module, and full panel files. The chapter covers both important conceptual issues and the mechanics of linking the various files.

Finally, the *Users' Guide* includes the following additional information:

- Appendixes contain in-depth discussion of weighting; tables with information about the size and number of waves, missing waves, oversampling, and additional information for selected SIPP panels; a crosswalk; and detailed information about topcoding.
- An acronym list provides a guide to the acronyms used in this manual.
- The glossary defines terms that may be unfamiliar to some users.
- The references section contains references and suggested reading for all chapters in this guide.
- An index helps users locate information quickly and easily.

Where to Go for More Information

The following sources provide expanded, specific information about various aspects of SIPP and related products.

SIPP Web Site

The SIPP homepage (located at <http://www.sipp.census.gov/sipp>) includes, among other things, this *Users' Guide* and an online tutorial that provides a hands-on introduction to SIPP. As the survey and data files evolve, the online documentation will be kept current. Also, users may subscribe at the SIPP Web site to sipp-users, a listserv for SIPP Users Group members. List members share new reports and studies, programming help, and research ideas.

SIPP Quality Profile

The *SIPP Quality Profile*, 3rd Ed. (U.S. Census Bureau, 1998a), summarizes what is known about the sources and magnitude of errors in estimates based on SIPP data. It presents information on errors associated with each phase of survey operations: frame design and maintenance, sample selection, data collection, data processing, estimation (weighting), and data dissemination. Some information, such as the outcome of macroevaluation studies, is addressed outside of this framework in a separate chapter. The *SIPP Quality Profile* is available at the SIPP Web site.

Bibliography

The SIPP bibliography, also available at the SIPP Web site under Publications and Analyses, is the most comprehensive, currently available online resource of published and unpublished documents related to SIPP. It includes substantive studies that use SIPP data, as well as citations to methodological research about SIPP. Documents relating to the ISDP also are included. The bibliography contains nearly 2,000 references to reports, conference papers, working papers, journal articles, dissertations, books, and book sections. Abstracts are available for selected publications.

Reports and Working Papers

The references cited in this report include several types of Census Bureau publications. The P-70 series (Current Population Reports, Household Economic Studies) presents tabulations and

analyses of SIPP data. SIPP working papers provide information about methodological aspects of the survey as well as analyses of SIPP data. The working papers are not cleared for formal publication but are readily available at the SIPP Web site. Since 1984, papers on SIPP results and methodology presented at the annual meeting of the American Statistical Association have been published in the working-paper series. Several important papers on SIPP methodology and evaluation studies have been presented and published in the proceedings of the Census Bureau's annual research conferences, which began in 1985. In addition to those sources, papers and reports with information about the quality of SIPP data have been published by numerous other agencies, organizations, and professional associations.

Technical Documentation

Technical documentation accompanies the SIPP microdata files that users acquire from the U.S. Census Bureau. The technical documentation briefly describes the contents of the particular file and includes the following items:

- A glossary of selected terms,
- Lists of codes and descriptions,
- A data dictionary and instructions on how to use it,
- A source and accuracy statement,
- A copy of the core questionnaire used for the panel in question,
- User notes, and
- File information.